

Ep. 63 Michelle Rudnicki from NetAPP

Welcome to the federal tech podcast. My name is John Gilroy and I will be your moderator. Today in the studio, we have Michelle Rebecky. She is vice president. Net AP US public sector. And we're gonna talk about this company called NET app. Now I know many listeners probably have heard of the company in the past. They've been around since 1992. In fact, they've been innovating since 1992. And that some of the questions I have for Michelle is how can you keep on coming up with new stuff. And I think what I wanted to do today is maybe showcase NetApp. And, and say, Look, NET app has got a lot of new things that you may not have heard of, we're gonna talk about things like on tap, we're gonna talk about things like blue XP, and all kinds of different odds and ends. But before we begin, perhaps Michelle, you can give our audience maybe just a thumbnail sketch of your background, you have a great technology background, and then we'll jump into questions about NetApp.

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Sure, thanks, John. Thanks for having me here. Today. I've had the pleasure of working in the federal IT industry for several decades now. I spent a career at IBM working with federal and public sector customers for most of that time doing various things around technology, software services, and helping customers to modernize looking at technologies such as Cloud green, cybersecurity, and the like, I moved on to a company called Virtustream. And it was a cloud that was designed to host enterprise applications. So you could, you could the cloud was designed for the applications, you didn't have to modify your applications to the cloud gave a great way for customers to trans, to transfer to cloud in an easy way. And that led me here to NetApp. Because NetApp, I had no NetApp and had competed with them from a technology standpoint, they started as a small filer company, just plug it in it was their their logo was or their motto was there were like a toaster, just plug it in, and it works, it starts storing your data. Over time, what we what NetApp has become is really we've taken all the great things, that simplicity that you could do on a network and just storing your data to extend that out and use the same principles, but be able to manage your data in the cloud outside of the cloud. And transferring between both. And that's where we've continued to innovate and partner with great companies in the industry to be able to deliver a broad spectrum of solutions to the federal clients, or all clients.

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And it is a broad spectrum. I mean, I went to YouTube, and there must have been 50 videos on this video, that's where this go, Oh, I just want to pick I'm gonna pick one or two arbitrarily, because there's just so much innovation coming out of NetApp. I'm gonna I'm gonna pick up one thing, and you're gonna have to run with it, maybe explain it to me explain to the audience. And this is a concept. It's called a blue XP. So So what is blue XP? What's it got to do with my federal listeners?

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Yeah, so blue x p is one of our latest releases of technology. And what blue x p allows customers to do. We've come into this world, or we've been on a cloud journey for quite some time. Now. You know, people started dipping their toe in cloud, maybe 1012 years ago, when it was one app or two apps or using one cloud servers



or another. As you look across the modern IT landscape. Now people are doing private clouds, they're doing public clouds, they're using AWS, they're using Microsoft, they're using Google. And they've got their data is spread everywhere. They're there it is spread everywhere. What blue X CLI allows you to do is use a single pane of glass to be able to manage across your entire IT landscape, look at your data, be able to move and manage it simply and easily. It also allows you to look across not only your storage, manage, but but looking at your IT infrastructure, and helping customers with those critical things, looking for savings, looking, you know, simplifying, and then also looking at their sustainability. So we'll have modules in there because that, as you know, is becoming a larger and larger concern. So how do I really measure and manage my energy utilization? So it really is an all in one area that you can go to or platform that you can use to manage your technology?

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Well, you know, I was I got a background radio when you said ATBS has to do big things raises it pays AWS and this brings up to the next next topic is is this thing called on tap with it. So you're working with AWS to save money for federal agencies, or how does this What's this? What's this concept all about?

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So on Tap on tap is actually one of the innovations or one of the critical IP products that has been with NetApp. Since the very beginning, it is our storage operating system that gave that simplicity so that you could, you can just plug him in and have access to your data on tap is that software IP that has that has stayed with us as the operating system and the filers that now is available not just in on prem, it's available in the cloud. And it's also been adopted by AWS, Google and Microsoft as a first party service. So you can use the same interfaces digital connections that you use on prem in the cloud, and you can, you can purchase it by through the hyper scalar. So NSX M, is AWS is offering of the on tap IP. So again, making it really simple for customers to be able to look at their data holistically across the entire landscape of their multi cloud environments.

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Michelle, I'm taking notes here, AWS and Google, and this and that, and data management. And I have to pull a document here and ladies and gentlemen, the jury, I have a document in front of me like to present, this is the National Cybersecurity strategy. And if you open this up, and I'm sure everyone's read this a million times, first pillar is defend us critical infrastructure. I mean, it seems it seems like it's playing right into your skill set, isn't it?

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Yeah. So we were we were thrilled to see the National Cybersecurity strategy come out. And actually, it's not just something for us or just for the Federal it's, it's really something we've been working with a number of the partners across the tech industry to implement some of the principles that are laid out and the National Cybersecurity strategy including cmmc, supply chain, including s bombs, and working both internally and externally outside of our company with a we also work with Sissa, with our CFO on the IT sector coordinating council. So we're doing a lot to help to put into action, everything that was laid out there. When we look at it from a NET app itself and how we help our customers. One of the things we actually up on the hill helping to help them connect the dots between the cybersecurity strategy and it modernization, right because your input, your security is only as good as your weakest link. And so we need funding coming in to the federal



government to help them with the IT modernization, because that's where some of the vulnerabilities are. And then lastly, when we look at cybersecurity, we've actually taking the zero trust approach to how we build our products to doing that implementing those principles in our development. And then taking into consideration what are some of the things that our customers might need? Doing certifications, such as the SFC, which is the NSA testing for commercial solute products for our Commercial Solutions for Classified program. So we were doing a lot to help. Everybody has to do their part because we're all connected in this networked world.

08:16

Okay, here's the three words from your website, distributed, dynamic, diverse, right? You spent a lot of money having someone write that. But that's, that's really what we're talking about. It's distributed, dynamic, and diverse, all kinds of different interoperability, different systems can connect and connect. Earlier, I mentioned that I went to YouTube and saw all these different products that you have. And I also typed in your name, and I listened to an interview you did. And one of the first things you talked about was was saving money. I said, Whoa, now we got something to talk about all of a sudden, people started listening. He talked about tearing. And so from a, you know, from a data management perspective, so how can tearing help one of my buddies save money? What is tearing? First of all? Yeah,

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so So tiering is the ability to take and look at your data and look how often it's used and be able to use different classes of storage that have different costs related to them for those different forms of data. So you might, you might be tearing both on prem, where do you use more expensive storage for, for your high performance applications. And you use a different class of storage for your lower performing or lower performance requirements, applications. You can also do cloud tearing, right? So data that you might not use as often you're gonna tear off to the cloud, because you don't need it right on prem. Again, helping you to reduce cloud costs, and also using automated tools to be able to tell you when you're not when that data needs to be moved to a lower, lower tier or lower cost of storage. So Cloud tearing really can help you and we call it cloud tearing, whether it's on prem or going going into a hyper scalar cloud. But Cloud tearing can really be used in help you manage your costs.

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So would cloud checker be pulled off your toolbox in order to determine the tearing would be is that the utility of cloud checker?

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Oh, no, no good, no cluttering product is the one that does cloud care. But Cloud checker is a different offering, what we've discovered is, you know, we come, we've come at the industry from the standpoint of the data, right, moving from the data out as we moved into the cloud. The other area that that we've seen, the need for our customers is in cloud operations. And Cloud checker is one of our offerings, that's currently going through the FedRAMP process that is put in place to help you manage your cloud spend, right? So it will look across your, your different. Your your cloud bill helps you to analyze that spending, and also help agencies where if you've got a centralized bill to be able to distribute that out to the various different departments, so you can allocate your your budgets or allocate your costs to where the budgets actually are.



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I would imagine if you're doing an analysis of a hybrid cloud, or a hybrid cloud transition, there may be a point where you got to, you know, it's like sitting down with a teenage kid and have that tough talk about the car, or you got to sit down and say, Well, look, you know, we have determined that we may have to move some stuff back on site, because it's not optimized to work on most stuff, or a lot of stuff is but this particular set isn't. And this is kind of a like, you know, we have to is moving back or is this actually it's saving money, isn't it? This I think this called repatriations

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repatriation. Yes, we've seen a number of customers because there was such a push, right. And a good one to help customers move to the cloud be able to gain the agility and suppose a cost savings. But as you said, some applications just don't, don't fit as well in the cloud environment. And they may be better from a cost standpoint to run on prem, there might be other benefits of running in the cloud, you might need the agility and you might want that. But in some cases, as you, as you've observed the patterns of an application, you may repatriated back on site, we've also seen that with AI another another good word. With AI applications, often customers start doing those in the cloud to do the initial learnings and and really figure out what's the AI model that I'm going to that I want to put in place. But then as they scale, they find that the cost and cloud may be more expensive for their particular environment. So they will look to do their testing development on in the cloud, but then do that application on site. So that's a little bit of less about repatriation, but really looking at at the application and the phases of your application and understanding where they're best cost optimized.

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Michelle, earlier in our conversation, you mentioned cmmc, in the DOD, I am lucky enough to get to interview a lot of people in the satellite community, people Space Force in generals and I've done a lot of I have a podcast on satellites and space. And I'd say what you want, you want to make them smile, the word resiliency, that boy, because once it gets up in the air, Hey, baby, you can't get up there and fix it. And so resiliency is really important for the military and other aspects. That's a satellite so so. So resiliency, has got to apply for hybrid systems as well. And I'm sure this has got to be some kind of a strategy behind optimizing because, you know, what level of data to put where and how to manage it. And And where's this fit up? This guy, this is going to be pretty complex, doesn't it?

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So so it is, everything in our IP environment these days, does seem to be getting more and more complex. And, you know, with resiliency, the good thing is, customers have options. Right? And just like we talked about before, resiliency, I think is is tied closely with with zero trust, right? And how do you build the most resiliency in while also having that that eye towards cost? And so, you know, one of the things that we've seen, one of the other benefits of doing cloud tearing is you can build resiliency, and as you're doing that, whether that's just in terms of peering the day that having it in different locations, so you can be able to access it, should you lose network connection, or, you know, you'd have the need to serve up your computer or doing something simply as backup, right? How do I how do I ensure that I've got, I've got the right backup and more importantly, the restore capabilities to be able to access my data. Right. So from our standpoint, it's building around a data



centric strategy building the security around the data itself that helps you to build that resilience and because you know, resilience is all about being able to keep going right should something happen.

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Resilience, resilience, I went to your website earlier today. And for the benefit of our listeners, they I think you have an ebook there. And I'll put the link in the show notes here. But the book is called fortify cyber resilience for your evolved cloud. Wow, that's pretty elegant there and evolved. Hi, Michelle can evolve your cloud? I guess that's what we're talking about, though, isn't it? It's like, hey, let's put everything in the cloud. No, let's bring everything back. No, maybe put half which half this half? When should we change? I mean, it's, it's like changing and moving, is evolving, isn't it?

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It is. And we've, we've adopted that evolve cloud phrase, because it really does say, we're into that next wave on the cloud journey. And we're into that hybrid multi cloud. So how do I now simplify that environment? How do I help customers to look across that? And we just talked about a lot of the principles that we see in the evolving cloud are the principles that need to be taken into account in the Evolve cloud? And how do I how do I do cost savings? How do I simplify? How do I make sure I have security? And then with an eye to the future? How do I look for sustainability. So it really does all comes together. And it ties back to, we do it with blue XP across that single management plane. So very excited to see how our customers are going to evolve along with us in this evolve cloud environment.

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Well, the only checkbox we haven't covered today is security. And I am sure that there are some crown jewels at the DoD that involve data, probably. And a company like yours has been around for 30 years, I'm sure you're quite familiar with some important assets that are digital have to be protected. And so I think what can happen if you're not careful with your enterprise architecture, you can one situations where you may or may not be backing up correctly, or you may have certain systems that can backup to others, and it can't. And so I would think this is when I think about the sum total of what NetApp does, it's it's a lot of enterprise architecture, it's almost like we've been there done that got the t shirt, let us maybe give you some suggestions for this, because you may not be recover if you do it this way.

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Certainly, and, and so we do a lot of work with our customers upfront, to help them to design what they're, you know, what's their best approach as they maybe that maybe the inflection point is moving to the cloud? Or maybe they're just reevaluating their enterprise architecture? And how do they take? How do they make sure that they're ending up and that ideal or optimized architecture as they go along. And with regard to security or cybersecurity, we work with them on their zero trust architectures. And we do it by by building things into our products that they can take advantage of, right. So some of the capabilities that have long insisted your ability to snap mirror and to snap lock and to be able to, to and I know those are fancy terms that that we use within that app, but it's the ability to really take snapshots of your data and protect them, protect them with a key so that they are protected from threats like ransomware, or any other attacks and be able to do that in a very



distributed way. So that it builds in the resilience that we've been talking about within your architecture. So lots of good things that we can help customers with. I don't

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want to beat a dead horse here. But if you look at the national cyber strategy, you look at resilience, invest in a resilient future, you know, and then shaped market forces to drive Security Plus resilience. So this is all just kind of hammering on the themes that the government wants to talk about. I want to go back to this concept of repatriation. It's like, it's like, no, I don't want electric car. I want to stick with my old diesel cars. No, no, no, no. I mean, it's almost like, well, maybe a diesel vehicle is more efficient. I don't know if that's true or not. But is it possible that? Well, Michelle walks into an agency and takes a look around uses the tools you have on your tool bag and goes, well, you know what, maybe we should pull this out back on site. And is it possible that they can reduce latency and maybe improve performance? If it's if it's on premise? Is that I guess it's possible?

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Well, it's definitely possible. And we definitely have seen customers do that. It's as it's like anything as as you scale up and your utilization goes up up activities that might have been minor when you were just in your testing or pilot mode. Sometimes it's the bandwidth as you said, right? When I go to do that I need to have I need to have better bandwidth. So then what I have access to so repatriating that back on site is the right thing to do. In a lot of cases, though, what we've seen is just the the volume of data that Customers have, and the cost of storing it and moving it in and out because our data is not static. And we need to use it in a number of different places. And so we've seen a number of customers that have have said, this, you know, we thought this would reduce our costs, but what we're seeing is it's actually increasing our costs. So let's take this one application and move it back that doesn't say that we're, we're not yo going, like, oh, everything in and then everything out. But on a selective basis, people are making the choice to say, look, given explicitly, some of our very large agencies, they have some pretty significant staff, and they've got some pretty significant footprints where it is less expensive for them to be able to manage their costs and manage their infrastructure. One of the other paths that we've seen some of our customers taking though is, is a little bit of, I'll call it a hybrid, is, I still want to be able to, uh, to pay only for what I'm using, as I'm using it, you know, not not going full back to I own everything, and I manage everything. And so we're working with a number of customers on consumption models, right where they buy it as a service that can be on their premise. But they're able to consume and just pay for what they're using. So they still get some of the nice benefits of a cloud like environment where they can, they can add capacity as they need it, need it, but only pay for it as they need it. So for us that offering is our Keystone offering. And we're working with a number of federal agencies, and that seems to be resonating pretty well, for those. For those environments, where they really want to have they, they look at it as a little bit less expensive to be on prem. And they have needs to keep things on prem, whether it's for security reasons, or the like. But that that's the, that's the other alternative of between fully repatriating and getting back to a CapEx and being able to move things into a more cost effective environment for yourself.

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You know, regular listeners know, my daughter is a financial analyst. And sometimes he would take that first word out finance, put in Data, Data Analyst. Now, when I think of a data analyst, I think of someone really



smart looking at graphs and charts and making decisions, but maybe a data analysts is, is figuring out what it costs to store the data. I mean, that's the same two words, but it's just look, you go ahead and do all the heavy, heavy lifting up there, but we're gonna make sure you can afford it. I mean, so maybe a data analyst in your situation is like, let's take your data, What's it cost to store here? Can we transfer to that? What's gonna, it's the what if scenario, I mean, it's just a different application of the term data analyst, isn't it?

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Yep. Yes, it is. And, you know, we have we have tools that can help help with that to identify what are the patterns, right, what are the what are the networking patterns? What are the utilization patterns of view data that that can help you? To understand that right? How do I tear it? How do I, you know, how do I best look at it? And what are my applications that are probably best suited for a cloud environment versus an on prem environment? Or, or other right, or some kind of hybrid?

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nuvia variation on the term data analyst? I'll just marked it up. So we're coming to an end? Do you want to take a look and make a forecast for the next five years and the federal government you think what kind of transition is going to take place? You think there's going to be an as I always say, an incident that's going to disrupt things? Or what do you think's gonna happen? The show?

23:38

Well, that, that

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we're gonna put this in concrete two, we're gonna put this in cockpit, you better be right, or else

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given the past couple of, how can you predict the world events of the past couple of years? Okay, what now? Can I imagine that, that hasn't yet happened. So, you know, I see us continuing to evolve right? From from, at least from an IT perspective, it's that rapid pace of innovation that needs to be adopted. And I think when I look at it at our federal environment, our customers are moving along the journey, and they're having to do it faster and faster. So, you know, I think that we're gonna see the industry continue to deliver tools to our customers to help them to simplify the management of what has become complex AI, it's it's maybe more of a of a cycle that we've seen happen before we saw it with distributed computing, you know, we centralized going to cloud cloud was brought everything to get there, but now we have multiple clouds and it's moving out into a broader, a broader spectrum that's gotten more and more complex. I think we need to simplify that again, because that's what will get us to the cost savings and really the agility that we need to keep pace with whatever over that inflection point might be that comes up next that will we'll need to be able to deal with because at the end of the day, right data is the fuel that helps us with the insights, to run the missions to run the businesses that that we need to do. So we've got to be able to capitalize on it and use that IT infrastructure to further the mission missions. Good, good, good.





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Well, unfortunately, we're running out of time here. You have been listening to the federal tech podcast with John Gilroy. I'd like to thank my guest, Michelle Rudnicki, Vice President NetApp US public sector